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A QUESTION which if not openly asked, waits for an answer in the mind of many a man, is this: Are religious teachers, including preachers, always strictly *candid* in their presentation of truth? Does the average college student, for example, who is led by his instructor to face the facts pertaining to the subjects which he considers, find in the religious teacher, under whom he, from time to time, places himself, the same direct openness of statement, the same sturdy grappling with difficulties which characterizes his college instructor? The question is asked, because, there is a prevailing feeling, whether right or wrong, among college men that in this particular a great difference lies between secular and religious instruction. The evil effects of such a sentiment, though it be an entirely erroneous one, will be, indeed already are, many and serious. College men, who are indifferent to religious influences,—how sad a commentary it is on the work of our college-system that this number is so large—do not, we are persuaded, doubt the sincerity of the speaker's motive; they feel, however, a lack of confidence in the man who presents only one side of a question, or who perhaps presents the other side, but in so half-hearted, and unfair a way as to indicate at once a purpose so to state it that the very statement will prevent acceptance; or who covers up certain facts, a knowledge of which is essential to a proper understanding of the question, or who in the case of difficulties either denies their existence, or makes an effort to explain them away by a process which shows conclusively that he is simply trifling with his subject. The average college man is keensighted. If he were not so, his education would have been a failure. He is cold and judicious; you cannot carry him

away by mere enthusiasm. He is alert and independent; you cannot drive him to a conclusion. He will listen respectfully; but the ordinary devices of the exhorter, the common claptrap method which characterizes too many of our good people who seek to catch him, will accomplish nothing. Approach him squarely, candidly, honestly; and he is the most susceptible man in the world, for he can be led to see the truth, the facts as they are, with half the effort and within half the time it requires to place the same facts before one who has not had the same discipline of mind. And, best of all, when he is once convinced, he stands; for his foundation is sure. It was not emotion, nor enthusiasm, nor false method of any kind which touched him; it was a bare statement of truth. Why, then, do so many college men stand aloof from the great truth presented in our sacred Scriptures? Because this truth has never been properly presented to them. Either this is true, or that truth of which we boast so much, is very weak. Is there not here at least a suggestion for religious teachers and preachers?

THE METHOD of presenting truth is the question of all questions. It is not a fact of experience that truth, *however* presented, will prevail; but it is certain that error well presented will invariably supplant a poorly presented truth.

(1) Shall the teacher decide for himself what, in a given case, is the truth, suppress everything that in the slightest degree deviates from his conception of it, use every possible means to present that particular conception to the mind of his pupil, and leave his pupil in densest ignorance of other conceptions, closely or loosely related, and, *necessarily*, of facts which were not taken up in the instructor's conception? Is it the instructor's business to insert into a certain cavity in his pupil's mind, a wooden plug—which will remain always a wooden plug until it rots, there being a possibility too that the plug is of a kind of wood which will soon rot?

(2) Shall this teacher lay before his pupil an unclassified list of all the opinions which have been entertained concerning a given subject, give him no idea of the principles in accordance with which these opinions were formed, allow him

to wander aimlessly from one to the other until finally he is lost in a wilderness of numerous details, with no idea of the subject he has set out to grasp, or of the deplorable darkness into which unconsciously he has come? Is it the instructor's business to sow in the mind of the student an endless variety of seed, with a sufficiency of no one kind to produce anything; seed of a kind, too, which, if allowed to grow up separately might have been very fruitful, but which growing together is mutually destructive?

(3) Shall not the instructor arrange before his pupil all the facts a consideration of which is necessary to reach a conclusion; point out how by grouping or interpreting these facts in accordance with one principle or set of principles, one conclusion is obtained, with another set of principles, another conclusion is arrived at; emphasize the great importance of having certain general principles, and yet the danger of accepting *any* principles of work until *all* the facts have been examined; impartially indicate the defect or the value of this or that principle, the certainty or the uncertainty of this or that fact; gradually lead the student to decide for himself the particular conclusion which he shall accept. Shall not the teacher sow the seed, whether for science, literature, philosophy, or theology, viz., *facts*, cultivate and nourish it in the pupil's mind, guide and care for the living thing that is now growing, and be careful neither to stunt nor to warp?

SHALL the teacher not declare or teach his own opinions? Much might be said in answer to this question. Let us, however, confine ourselves to two phases of it.

(1) The true scholar *knows* that his opinions are liable to modification, if he continues to grow. He *knows* that, if he teaches his pupil only or even largely his own opinions the pupil will have nothing very solid on which to stand, and moreover will soon need the teaching of another set, or a modified set of opinions. It is only the narrow and ignorant pretender to knowledge who is confident that he, however dark the whole world may be, is possessed of light. Dogmatism, in any realm of thought, is the daughter of superstition and of death. It springs from a mind envel-

oped in a mist which it fancies to be light; from a mind which is barren, though still having a semblance of life. The teacher, therefore, who is also a scholar and at the same time conscientious, will be slow to *teach* his own opinion. This same conscientiousness, however, will lead him to indicate his opinion, for it is altogether probable that in arranging facts and stating principles, his work has been unconsciously colored by these opinions. The student, therefore, is entitled to know the opinions, in order that knowing them, he may make proper allowance for such influence, and may thus be better able to estimate the facts and principles at their true worth. Opinions, so far as they are established are to be indicated not *taught*. It by no means follows from this that the man with fewest opinions is the best teacher. Let men have many and strong opinions, but let us remember that they are after all the opinions of *one* man, of a man, not the opinions of many men, or of a god.

(2) A portion of any class or audience will accept as true and final a statement of opinion on the part of the teacher or speaker, solely because he is the teacher or speaker, and has uttered it; another portion, smaller, will reject the opinion just because it has been uttered; a third portion, still smaller, will weigh the statement, study it, and, after fair consideration, accept or reject as the case may be. Is this not true? If so, the statement of an opinion on the part of an instructor is likely to be prejudicial to the interests of true education, for in the majority of cases it is either accepted blindly or blindly rejected, and the mind, in all these cases is closed. A prudent instructor will never give his pupil the opportunity either to accept or reject a truth merely because it is an opinion which he, the instructor, entertains. It is only with great caution, and under proper circumstances, that the ideal instructor, whether in the class-room or in the pulpit will state his opinions. He will never ask, either directly or indirectly that the opinions be taken because he holds and utters them. There is an important use to be made of one's opinions; it is not wrong to say, however, that opinions are more frequently abused than used.

SHALL we go a step further? A common direction given young preachers by wise homiletical professors is this: Never take your processes into the pulpit, carry only the results;—a piece of advice as *false* as it has been universally given, and as *injurious* as it has been universally followed. What the people desire, what certainly they need, is processes, *not* results. The soul is not to be ministered unto as is the body, The physician may prescribe for the patient and tell him, “take this or die;” but the preacher may not propound or compound a certain dogma however simple and easy to swallow, and say to his hearers, “believe or be damned.” In reaching a certain conception of a great truth, the preacher has passed from one phase to another, and gradually has prepared himself for the conclusion which was the inevitable outcome of his line of thought. But now, following the advice of the sage professor, he enters the pulpit and presents in thundering tone (for he must show that it is a conviction), or, perchance, with persuasive voice (for he would cajole the people into accepting the oracle about to be uttered) the subject of his thought. It is uttered, but it falls upon minds which have not been prepared for it; they do not see it in its entirety; they see only a result. He may present reasons; but the common mind does not work that way. Why, in the name of conscience, should not the preacher present his truth in the very way in which he got it? Let him begin far back, farther back indeed than he himself began, and gradually lead the minds of those whom he addresses, step by step, thought by thought, to the end. *Then*, when minds are awake, and hearts are warm by the exercise of both mind and heart through which they have just been led, he may *apply* the truth, as in no other circumstances it may be applied. His thought will be his people’s thought. He has led them to accept his opinion, by an honest and legitimate method. In any such work, he has been honest, and candid; for he has opened up the whole working of his mind; and dishonesty, if any existed, would not easily be concealed. There is a loud, none too loud, hue and cry about “Inductive teaching.” Let us raise the cry, and keep it raised, for *Inductive Preaching*.